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Situation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women**

Note by the Secretary-General

1. The present note is submitted pursuant to paragraph 13 of Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/40 on revitalization and strengthening of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), by which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Council at its substantive session of 2002, and pursuant to paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 56/125, by which the Secretary-General was requested to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session, through the Council, on the implementation of that resolution. The note updates the information on the implementation of the INSTRAW work programme and on managerial and financial matters presented in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session (A/56/279) and in the report of the Board of Trustees of the Institute to the Economic and Social Council (E/2002/70) and also describes the current status of the working group to be formed in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/125.

2. During the past year, the Institute has been working on the implementation of phases III and IV of its Gender Awareness Information and Networking System (GAINS).[1] The basic structure and the navigation of the GAINS web site are nearing finalization. After pilot testing, the project on men's roles in ending gender-based violence[2] was completed, resulting in a new INSTRAW publication entitled *Partnerships for Change in Ending Gender-Based Violence* (in preparation). The lessons learned from the project are being applied in the activities planned by the Institute for 2002. For example, INSTRAW has successfully completed its project on the gender aspects of ageing. The project provided the academic and policy-making communities, as well as non-governmental organizations, with a web-based collection of resources on diverse gender aspects of ageing. It also featured an electronic discussion forum on the gender aspects of violence against older persons, including background and synthesis papers summarizing the gender dimensions of ageing. Findings were made available in time for the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid in April 2002.

3. The Institute has also initiated a collaborative research project on gender and information and

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** The note was submitted after the deadline owing to delays in convening the working group on the future operation of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

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communication technologies, which will be concluded in the third quarter of 2002. This project features a special online collection of resources on the subject. Five working papers covering global and regional gender-related perspectives on such critical issues as access, use, regulation and management of information and communication technologies will serve as background documents for a series of virtual seminars currently in preparation by INSTRAW. The virtual seminars will be conducted during the period July-September 2002. The results will be an input into the preparations for the World Summit on the Information Society, to be held in 2003.

4. Two more research projects currently in the pipeline for implementation in the third and fourth quarters of 2002 deal with the gender dimensions of environment and sustainable development and men's roles in reproductive health care. In August 2001, the Office of Internal Oversight Services conducted an audit of the operations and financial management of INSTRAW as a follow-up to its earlier audit, conducted in 1997. The findings and recommendations of the auditors are available in document A/56/907. As many of the recommendations are intended for the intergovernmental working group and the Interim Manager/Director of INSTRAW, measures to be taken in response to the findings and recommendations will be dealt with by them in due course.

5. In view of the pressing need to correct the anomalies brought to light by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs sent an internal evaluation mission to INSTRAW in September 2001, which confirmed the findings. The Officer-in-Charge of INSTRAW, who was appointed following the resignation of the Director at the end of July 2001, has been working under the close supervision of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for INSTRAW. Under the guidance of the Special Representative, the Institute prepares weekly substantive reports on programme matters and receives clearance of personnel, financial and administrative actions. The Institute continues with its operations and implementation of its modest work programme for 2002, as outlined in the report of the Board of Trustees to the Economic and Social Council (E/2002/70).

6. Concerned that the Institute should be provided with the appropriate leadership, both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly urged the Secretary-General to appoint a Director. Given the Institute's financial situation and its limited resources for programme delivery, a number of qualified candidates contacted by the Secretariat declined the offer of appointment. With these difficulties in mind and in order to ensure ongoing management of the Institute, it was decided to appoint an Interim Manager/Director pending the outcome of the working group on the future operation of INSTRAW.

7. On 24 June 2002, the Interim Manager/Director was appointed in consultation with the Board of Trustees. She will accompany the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for INSTRAW in early July 2002 to INSTRAW headquarters in Santo Domingo to meet with staff and familiarize herself with the current work programme and operations of the Institute. She will also meet agency counterparts and staff. It is envisaged that once the intergovernmental working group is constituted, the Interim Manager/Director will provide substantive servicing to the group.

8. During the period since the last report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/56/279), the financial situation of INSTRAW continued to deteriorate. Pending the outcome of the working group, major donors significantly decreased their voluntary contributions to the INSTRAW Trust Fund, and fund-raising efforts deployed by both the United Nations Secretariat and the Institute have not brought about the desired effect of reversing the negative trend in voluntary contributions. As of 31 May 2002, the total of voluntary contributions received for 2002 amounted to $24,326. As a result, the Institute increasingly relies on the United Nations regular budget subventions to finance its core activities.

9. In view of the critical financial situation confronting the Institute, the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 2001, recommended that the General Assembly consider the approval of an advance for the Institute for 2002,[3] similar to the advance approved by the Assembly in its resolution 55/219, in which it decided to provide the Institute with financial assistance on a non-recurrent basis to enable it to continue its activities throughout 2001.[4]

10. In response to that recommendation, the General Assembly decided to retain in the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, $[illegible]50,000 of the original

$800,000 provision made pursuant to its resolution 55/219 and requested the Secretary-General to disburse the provision in December 2001 as a subvention to be credited to the Trust Fund of the Institute, so as to ensure the continuation of its operations in 2002.[5]

11. The Secretariat made these funds available to the Institute in December 2001. As at 31 December 2001, the total reserves and balances of the INSTRAW Trust Fund, including the subvention of $650,000 authorized by the General Assembly, amounted to $849,654. These resources should allow INSTRAW to continue its operations in 2002 with a limited staffing table (one D-1 (Interim Manager/Director), one P-3, two P-2s and four General Service posts) and should cover basic programme-related activities as well.

12. In paragraph 4 (a) of its resolution 56/125, the General Assembly decided to establish a working group composed of two governmental representatives from each of the five regional groups of the United Nations and one representative of the host country, the mandate of the working group being to make recommendations to the General Assembly before the end of the fifty-sixth session, for its consideration by the end of 2002, on the future operation of the Institute.

13. To date, only three regional groups are fully represented in the working group and two other regional groups have designated one representative each. Thus, only eight Governments and the host country, out of eleven envisaged in General Assembly resolution 56/125, have expressed their readiness to participate in the working group. If the working group is to submit its report on the future operation of INSTRAW to the General Assembly before the end of the fifty-sixth session, it is critical that the remaining regional groups nominate their representatives as expeditiously as possible.

14. Despite the Institute's efforts to implement its modest but relevant work programme and the efforts of the Secretariat to support it, the financial and institutional difficulties affecting the Institute persist. **In light of these difficulties and with a view to the General Assembly's decision to establish a working group under resolution 56/125, the Council may wish to discuss the critical situation of INSTRAW and recommend actions to expedite the formation of the working group and facilitate its decisions on the future operation of the Institute.**

Notes

[1] Phases III and IV consist of (a) expansion of the technological infrastructure of GAINS, including the database, hardware, software and connectivity requirements; (b) further expansion of the GAINS networks; and (c) piloting of the GAINS collaborative methodology through the implementation, testing and evaluation of an online research and training project.

[2] See A/56/279, para. 12.

[3] See Economic and Social Council resolution 2001/40, para. 9.

[4] See General Assembly resolution 55/219, para. 6, and decision 55/457, paras. (a) and (b).

[5] See General Assembly resolution 56/240, para. 3.